

Poya Sermons

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Narada Center - Poya Day Sila Program

||| IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM |||

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

Narada Center, 380 / 9 Sarana Road, Colombo 7, announces its Poya Day Sila Program in the new millennium with new thinking, a new look and a new emphasis. All over the world today, the interest in Buddhism is being focussed on its fundamental teachings. These are the precepts and injunctions which relate to human life, to foster better inter-personal relationships and to enhance the quality of human life of men, women and children, in order to achieve both their social

and religious goals..

It has to be admitted that any search for the goal of Nirvana in Buddhism has to be along these lines. Quality of human life has to be upgraded in this direction, with the help of the two basic items of sammā-diṭṭhi and sammā-saṅkappa of the Noble Eight fold Path. Good life in Buddhism is always heralded by sammā-diṭṭhi or vision corrected in the true Buddhist way. By no stretch of imagination is Buddhist sammā-diṭṭhi any body's and everybody's common property.

This should invariably be followed by the second step in the Noble Eight fold Path, namely the three items of sammā-saṅkappa, i.e. the spirit of renunciation or nekkhamma-saṅkappa and the two items of non-violence and non-injury, i.e. avyāpāda-saṅkappa and avihimsā-saṅkappa.

We know that this is the way in which one has to proceed to good words, good deeds and good livelihood. This is also where all our sīla should begin, for it is the ennobling process of human life. In the new millennium, the Sila Program at the Narada Center is reorganized to be in conformity with these aspirations. This alone makes it meaningful in the face of the challenges of the new millennium. We wish to pay adequate attention to Budu Guna and Ratanattaya vandanā, with greater attention to the adoration of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, the incomparable objects of veneration in the whole universe, as expressly stated in the Ratana Sutta in the following:

*Yaṃ kiṃ ci vittaṃ idha vā huraṃ vā saggesu vā yaṃ ratanaṃ paṇītaṃ
na no samaṃ atthi tathāgatena idam'pi Buddhhe ratanam paṇītaṃ.*

In the area of Bhāvanā or culture of body and mind, there shall be more sitting down to doing it, with less and less of descriptive or prescriptive talking about it. A monk or two shall always sit with the lay community, setting an example and assisting them, when and where necessary. Correct sitting and correct breathing will be considered a basic requirement for successful

meditation. Participants will be trained to acquire this with minimum delay. Any further assistance in this area, outside the poya day program, may be had on request. Benefits of such bhāvanā in one's daily life should soon be felt and appreciated by the participants. Rewards of such therapy in one's daily life is difficult to match.

It is also our desire to acquaint our participants with more and more of Buddhavacana or the actual teachings of the Buddha, directly from the original sources in the Suttas. While we respect the teacher-pupil tradition of learning in Sri Lanka, we wish to remind our Sri Lankan Buddhists that there has been, in this process, too much deflection from the original spirit of the Buddha's teaching. This definitely has to be put right. We shall endeavour to use our Dhamma Discussion Group to remedy this.

Yet another undertaking of ours in the new millennium would be the re-introduction of Buddhist parittas or Pirit into the religious and social life of the Buddhists with a new value content. They shall know what they listen to when the monks chant. So also when they chant the parittas themselves. While some of the parities like the Aṭṭhānāṭṭiya retain their mantra-like character, most others like the three main ones of the Maha Pirita, namely Mangala, Ratana and Metta Suttas have very rich Buddhist values contained in their texts. Mangala Sutta is not a mere luck bringing mantra to be recited at wedding ceremonies, or at the laying of a foundation for a new house etc. It is a character building prescriptive text, detailing the virtues to be acquired by men, women and children for success in life, for it says ' Having perfected these virtues, one shall never fail. One shall always achieve success and happiness everywhere.'

Etādisāni katvāna sabbattha m'aparājitā sabbattha sotthiṃ gacchanti.

So is the Metta Sutta which is a prescription for the practice of loving kindness. We would encourage more and more people to learn the meaning of these Suttas and imbibe their spirit into their lives. They should constantly

contemplate on these. We would wish our participants to indulge less in choral singing of these together with monks. We would really read these Suttas in the assembly, with more emphasis on their meaning. We would internalize the power of the parittas within you and make them something which you could handle yourself, with your own satya kriyā when your son falls ill or when you wish to safeguard and take care of your daughter's pregnancy.

What we have stated above are only a few guide lines for new thinking, in the new century or the new millennium, as to what you should when you assemble regularly for Sila activities with us. Sila assemblies, wherever they are held, should gradually, and in no uncertain terms, build up to greater stature the moral, intellectual and spiritual life of the lay community and help them to live in hope and trust with the Sangha community.

Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo Loko hotu sukhī sadā.

May the word of the Buddha prevail long. May there be happiness in the world.



(1) The Message of the Poson Full Moon Day of more than Twenty-Three Centuries Ago.

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

Greetings to our readers. Today is the full moon day of the month of June, i.e. Poson. There is no gainsaying the fact that a sermon to you on the full moon day of Poson should have some special reference to Sri Lankans as a whole. This is irrespective of all caste, creed and religious differences. Sri Lanka is what it is today for everybody who lives here, sans its current monstrocities, because of its more than twenty-three century old history.

From a bit of a rough and tumble worldly culture of deer hunting and

seasonal water sports, both of its royalty as well as the commoners, Sri Lankan history shows a definite change in the direction of its cultural growth. With the introduction of Buddhism to the island on a very peaceful and culturally acceptable level, there was never a point of resistance on the part of the receiver against the giver. As it is historically proved to us today, this message of Buddhism was ever unsurpassable even by great world religions that came after it centuries later. The only successful attacks against Buddhism anywhere have always been shown to be through sheer brutal force.

It is established beyond doubt that even pre-Zoroastrian culture of Iran has had a very rich Buddhist cultural foundation on which it latterly developed its own culture pattern. It is said to have been so even in Turkistan. In Sri Lanka, unlike in most other regions where hostile forces ruthlessly shut out Buddhism's impact on others, it has been possible to fight out all such hostilities and maintain a more than satisfactory degree of survival. State patronage, in most cases, has been favourable to Buddhism. The war of Duṭṭagamunu, almost within a hundred years of the arrival of Buddhism in the island, is a clear example of the line of justifiable action taken by a true Defender of the Faith against all hostilities and opposition.

Within three days after the arrival of Thera Mahinda in Sri Lanka, King Devānampiya Tissa wished to know how best the new religion could be established in the island. Two positions were indicated. Firstly that there should be provision for the valid execution of ecclesiastical acts of the Sangha by setting up formal boundaries known as Sīmā. The Buddhist Saṅgha had, at all times, to act within ecclesiastically accepted legal norms. Not according to each individual's whims and fancies. At this stage the king made a remarkable request that his own residence be included within this ecclesiastical boundary, pledging to be always under the jurisdiction of the commands of the Buddha -

Sambuddhāṇāya anto ' haṃ vasissāmi jutindhara.

The other was to completely nativise the Sāsana by getting persons of this country to enter the Order, i.e. become Buddhist monks and nuns, and learn the

Dhamma and propagate it themselves. Both these were successfully done, the king himself showing complete compliance to the new culture introduced into the land. As far as Buddhism was concerned, what took place in Sri Lanka was a complete process of acculturation. It was a spontaneous identification of the State and the Religion. Historically, the significance of this wedlock of the State and Religion is not to be overlooked. This is what led in course of time to the development of the powerful belief that kings of Sri Lanka should not only be Buddhists, but should themselves be Bodhisattvas. To those with any sense of logic in their heads, this is nothing but the meaningful outcome of a logical process of historical evolution.

If the militant religions of the western world, with their reputed evangelical zeal, are to be more acceptable and respectfully received today for their religious worth in the eastern world of Asia, they must come with an honest message of true love, of live and let live, subscribing to peaceful co-existence. The naked spirit of conquest anywhere, of people, their lands, their religious beliefs and social customs which underlay colonialism of the good old days must give way to respect and recognition of global cultures, whether of the east or of the west. Bereft of this, the tide of globalization would naturally and effortlessly end up being criminally devastating, displacing the old with some ingeniously devised new things, unmindful of the worth of the stock in trade.

The new religion of Buddhism in Sri Lanka had an adequate package to deliver. On the very first day of arrival here, the Thera preached to the king and his retinue the very comprehensive Cūhatthipadopama Sutta which not only outlines the manifesto of Buddhism but also gives in adequate detail the path whereby a serious adherent shall soon attain without fail the desired goal of Nibbāna.

This was soon followed by sermons relating to the good life lived here by the faithful. They come in texts like the Vimānavatthu and Petavatthu and in suttas like the Devadūta and Bālapaṇḍita. They are not to be misjudged as mere stories of

heavens and hells. Please do not think of *petas* as mere menacing hungry ghosts who come to your homes uninvited and start bullying you ceaselessly. This is not the only thing your dead relatives want to do.

Let not astrologers and all manner of fortune-tellers fool you with these grandmothers tales. Learn to think more respectfully and respectably about your dead relatives. On a day like this, let the entire family rise to wage war against this kind of stupidity. It is an absolute shame that one house lady passes on this information to half a dozen others, merely because she has heard someone say this. Sri Lankan Buddhists need to have more sense above their shoulders if they are going to be worthy inheritors to the Poson day message of Thera Mahinda. History proves that he has turned out to be a Buddhist emissary of the first order, anywhere any time.

The concept of *petas* should be no more than a grim reminder about what is in store for you and me if we neglect our social obligations, violating the wholesome ethics of Buddhism which outline carefully as to how you should live in relation to those around us. Think of *Peta* Dhanapāla who regularly took his meals behind closed doors and windows, ordering his servants to do so. This he did deliberately to shut out all poorer ones in the neighbourhood who would ask for a morsel of the rich food he enjoyed. These poorer ones in the category of have-nots need to be thought of when you are excessively liberal in your enjoyment of Kentucky fried chicken and your Italian Pizas. If you are generous with them, then you do not need to be scared of *petas*.

Kaṇhamuṇḍa *Peti*, yet another character from the *Petavatthu*, tells us the story of a lady, a social elite, who knew not the limits of her social propriety in married life. Being intolerably adulterous, she lied to her in-laws, claiming for herself chastity of the highest order. Being born a *peti* in her next life, she was devoured every night by a great black dog, according to the pattern she had opted, reducing her to a mere bundle of bleached bones. Do not be attracted too much to the picture value of the story. Think of the ethics which are upheld in the

Buddhist context, at least in conformity to the then civilized world.

What we have said so far is only an outline sketch of what Buddhism stands for as a message to mankind, for their well-being here and now, in this very existence into which they are born. It also prescribes for the enhancement of the quality of life beyond death for the attainment of a desired spiritual goal. We do not as Buddhists collectively fight, canvassing everybody around, for the establishment of a kingdom of the Buddha in an unknown and unseen region. It is here and now. See it, reach it and reap the harvest there of, if ever you wish to do so.

It is therefore paramount that we deliver sermons to our flock with this as a priority in mind. It has to be a collectivist endeavour, both by the people and the State, to make the society in which we live good enough to cultivate an ethically and morally good life. Mark my words. We need to be really serious about it. The situation is as bad as the possibility of an asteroid striking our planet and sending us all to an unimaginable doom. International relations and pacts with the international community which bring in only more and more dollars and pounds sterling are not good enough. What good does it do to gain the whole world if we would lose our own souls? This is good enough scriptural admonition, no matter from whichever religious tradition it comes, for everybody, both our rulers and us who are the ruled. Money, how it is earned and where it finally goes into is the primary source of corruption. All is not too good in this area. We have too much evidence of this all around us.

Sri Lanka, in spite of its multi-ethnicity and multi-religiousness, is indeed a very small country. It cannot and should not entertain fragmentation on any basis of religion or ethnicity. Even the world at large cannot, without suicidal consequences, admonish or entertain such devastating policies, unmindful of their dire consequences. We know of countries where such policies have been violently attempted and where they have ended up with far greater violent results. Let us not turn a blind eye to historical realities.

Why don't we all constitu-ent members unite to make Sri Lanka a bastion of human goodness, good enough for all men, women and children to live with honour and dignity within it. If you want to tag on to it the addendum - ' Worthy of the name of God who created it', please do so. God in reality is nothing but goodness and justice. Do not make God vanish into thin air.

In this country, we do need a united and integrated multi-ethnic and multi-religious society for the protection of goodness in the land. We shall call it Goodness Protection Society - *Sadācāra-Samrak-aka-Sabhā* in Sinhala. Please give me a name in Tamil. Do not be ambitious or unnecessarily arrogant to arrogate this role to any single group or community. This country shall not be the breeding ground for petty ethnic or religious rivalries. On no count do we, as ethnic or religious groups, have the need to be aggressive to the other, if we do honestly recognize and appreciate the worth of the other.

This is where a greater degree of sanity must come both to the State and the religions of this country. The State has to be credibly powerful and stable enough, without any need to lean on bargaining petty groups. If the so-called minorities or smaller segments of the people of this country have any real grievances, they certainly need, in the eyes of non-partially aligned international assemblies, to be looked into. Questionably aligned or assigned nations cannot certainly come on the scene, neither as prosecuting nor as defending lawyers. International participation has certainly to be above board, without any element of pressure or coercion towards anybody, direct or even subtly indirect.

Governing policy by the state shall always be through just and honest convictions. This is where Buddhism steps into assert that people governed by a just and good ruler always have, in the first instance, their basic human rights safeguarded. This is the well known pattern of good political theory advocated by the Buddhist Universal Monarch or *Cakkavatti*. They are, believe me, much wider and more benevolently extensive than the hackneyed *dasarāja dharma* known and taught to you all the time.

It shall be the duty of the State to safeguard all life within its jurisdiction, including that of bird and beast. Why talk of animal life when human life, in terms of the state law, is not at all safeguarded. Pre-election and post election encounters of recent times, unimaginable family feuds of dividing up parental inheritance, broken up love affairs both pre-marriage and post-marriage know all the time of brutal massacres of men, women and children of all ages. We are told at every turn that adequate legal systems exist as safeguards against these. But in the name heavens, where is the necessary law enforcement authority in this country to detect these, prosecute and punish miscreants. Are the courts gone into undetermined recess? Has not the sun yet risen on the speculated ministries of legal reforms?

As to what happens to animal life in this once upon a time *mā ghāta* country of NO-ANIMAL-SLAUGHTER, many more people in the country besides the State Department of Wild Life know of the scandalous stories of animal destruction. Who kills, for whose sake, and with whose approval or connivance, is the question. Even the better known oracle readers of this country, whether in the ministries or outside, never dare answer such questions. We are familiar with dozens of books written in English on this subject, at world level, of save animals and animal liberation by Professors of various grades like Peter Singer of Australia who was recently appointed to Princeton in America as Professor of Bio-ethics.

Those who are Buddhists as well as those non-Buddhists in this country who know something worthwhile about Buddhism, and I know for certain that there many more than you imagine, would immediately realize how much the first precept of the Buddhist *pañcasīla* endeavours to safeguard this position of respect for all forms of life. Can not a State which claims to govern a country with an overwhelmingly large Buddhist population be made to show some sensitivity to such a point of view? Sanity of world opinion would undoubtedly side with them. But today ' Do we choose sanity or insanity? ' is the question. Which pays

better dividends, I ask you, within the party and back in the electorate?

In this manner we can continue to scan the Buddhist horizon to ascertain as to what the Buddhist concept of religiousness endeavours to provide for welfare and well-being in the world, not only for the humans but for all life in its entirety. Out of the injunctions of the *pañcasīla*, even if we take only this very first one of indiscriminated love and respect for all life, this alone would suffice to make a much happier and blissful place of the world we currently live in. Aware of this Buddhist injunction or even unaware of it, there is a definite trend in the world today, as we have already hinted at above, to respect all forms of life in the world, on the basis of concepts like bio-diversity and eco-systems. With or without a creationist theory, the world today is refusing to accept the position of leaving the process of creation of life in unseen hands, and man arrogantly taking into his hands the authority to destroy life.

Let us not forget that a wiser world after the World War II, realizing the brutality of man who was created to live in here, embarked on the theme of human rights. The saner world not only felt that life in the world [humans only being in their lop-sided vision], need to be protected, but also what goes as possessions of people which they acquire, legitimately of course, to make their lives smooth and comfortable. This therefore ranks, with ease, as item number two of human rights. We grant that everybody feels the need of this safeguard. But we are proud that Buddhism, with its down-to-earth realism, has smoothly built this concept as item number two into its *pañcasīla*.

One last word about Buddhist *pañcasīla* before we bring our sermon today to a close. We are not sure as to how many people, Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists, know the emphasis with which *pañcasīla* is presented in Buddhism. *Pañcasīla* is basically an ethic of inter-personal relationships. A breach of any single precept of it shatters society from two primary angles. First it plunges society into a lamentable state of distrust and insecurity. For this reason, the breach of precepts is called *pañca-bhayāni* or fivefold dreads which society

comes to suffer. Their breach, viewed sociologically as personal lapses, poisons the human heart individually. Therefore they are called *pañca-verāni* or fivefold enmities or hostilities.

A tremendous importance is attached to them in Buddhism. A perfect infallible keeping of them, like the count down before the launching of a space satellite, is considered capable of ensuring the person concerned of not slipping into the degraded states of so-called *nirayas* or *apāyas*. This is the grooming for life which Buddhism provides for mankind in this very life in which they live.

May all beings be well and happy. May there be peace on earth and goodwill among men.



(2) The Message of Arahant Mahinda to Sri Lanka

(Poson 2004)

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.

Loving thoughts of good will and friendship to all our listeners. This is the moon day of the month of June, i. e. the Poson Poya day. Any amongst us Sri Lankans who have a reasonable sense of pride in their heads about their cultural heritage of more than a two and half millennia in this land, should, on a day like this, recollect the historical situation in Sri Lanka prior to the arrival of Buddhism in this country.

Even more important than that is to assess and assimilate the **advances in the different phases of human culture** that Sri Lanka has gone through as a result of this revolutionising impact that Buddhism had on this newly emerging Sri

Lankan community, calling them and the land in which they lived collectively, Sinhalas [as did Fa Hsien, the Chinese traveller monk of the 5th century A.D.] or calling them Helas or whatever else you like as you do now, to be in harmony with the foot-lights on the contemporary stage.

You are well aware that there is now a new breed called the re-writers of ancient history, in Sri Lanka as well as elsewhere, who are no more than political propagandists and vociferous blocks of global cheer crowds, who could be rounded up with promises of cheap bargains. In my sermon today, I wish to speak to those who like to be enlightened on some of these issues of Buddhism and Sri Lanka.

The message of Thera Mahinda turns out to be, measuring by any standards, the most fortunate gift we Sri Lankans received a little over two thousand three hundred years ago. At that time, during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa, were we Sri Lankans so very highly cultured, or let me put the question differently, **not cultured enough**, that our pre-Buddhist king of Anuradhapura took to deer hunting as a royal sport, as some of the big ones in the western world did almost until the other day? King Tissa was a gentleman of deep convictions, but a somewhat spoilt one. Nevertheless, within three days of meeting Thera Mahinda [and resulting from his associations with his unseen good friend Emperor Asoka of India], Tissa pledged to govern the country, submitting himself to the good counsel of governance of the Buddha [*sambuddh@@@ya anto'ha@vasissāmi jutindhara* - Mhv. XV. vv.182 ff.]. There was neither pressure nor persuasion on him at that time from anywhere, via religion, political authority or ethnic dominance. His cultural identity was unassailable. Luck would have it, his friendship with Asoka was not a stop-gap alliance.

The arrival of Thera Mahinda in Sri Lanka, with the Asokan gift of Buddhism, marked a turning point in our history. And in world history too. Within a couple of centuries thereafter, we were turned away from hunting, both as a sport as well as **a venue for gluttonous eating**. Forget not that pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka at the

time even had a God-of-the-Hunt or *Vyādha - deva* whose abode was a palm tree or *Tāla - rukkha*.

It was by royal decree, a few centuries later, that with the *mā ghāta* proclamation, or the ban on slaughter of animals, **security to life of bird and beast and fish in this country was introduced**. Our indebtedness as a country or as a nation to the source of this inspiration has to remain incalculable and unassailable for all times. **Cultured under the civilising force of Buddhism**, and **following this tradition of just kingship**, kings of Sri Lanka like Āmandagāmanī, Silākāla, Aggabodhi IV and Mahinda III, ordered that no animals should be slaughtered [*Mā ghātaṃ kārayi dīpe sabbesaṃ yeva pāṇinaṃ*. Mhv. 41. v. 30].

Those exemplary rulers set up veterinary hospitals for the treatment of sick animals. Sanctuaries for animals, including safe pools for fish in rivers and lakes, became a common sight in the land. Certainly there were no **shameless state sponsored inland fisheries for the gluttons** and the **ingenious money spinning business tycoons** whom the **state and the religious leaders had to patronise**. But behold the world today. After more than twenty-three centuries, re-writing of history to serve contemporary needs of religion, politics and ethnicity is seen to be having its disastrous consequences on human life, both here in our native land and elsewhere.

This message of peace of Buddhism is indeed what the whole world today is looking up to, conscious or unconscious of the process of doing so. It is the message of Sakyamuni the Buddha, given to mankind as a whole, with no thoughts of chosen or selected people, of any land or any race. This is what earns for Buddhism in this millennium. its honoured title of **Fastest Spreading Religion** in many parts of the world. At the time it was delivered by the Buddha in the Indo-Gangetic valley in Asia, it was by no means meant to be Indo-centric.

Within a very short time, overriding barriers of ethnicity and physical terrain, it reached as far west as the Caspian Sea, over today's warring regions of the

Middle East, Afghanistan, Iran etc. In the north, it traversed over deserts along the ancient Silk Route, north and south of the Gobi desert, reaching China as early as 50 A.D. China, Korea and Japan came under its benign influence, reflecting to the world even today, their cultural enrichment under the guidance and inspiration of Buddhism. Think of Japan's *ike bana* or the art of flower arrangement of world-wide fame, or its rich heritage of landscape gardening, the tea ceremony etc. etc.

In the message of Buddhism, the world shall find comfort today in the face of threats of violence and disaster both at social and domestic levels, **prompted by religio-ethnic fanaticism**. It is equally true of rape and brutal murders **set in motion by multi-pronged sex excitement**, in every segment of the world. The story is not very different with regard to pathetic devastation today of mankind, at all ages, resulting from Aids, HIV, and STD or **sexually transmitted diseases resulting from moral licentiousness**, facilitated by **different culture levels of the world today**.

The much debated problems of abortion, fatherless homes and unmarried mothers, **witnessed with lamentable complacency all around us, here and everywhere**, could very well be kept at a low ebb, only if sanity prevailed and the words of the Buddha were adequately heeded. Global seminars seem to bring very little sanity into these areas, when there is **very clear evidence that the misdeeds of these agents of evil are being protected by high-ups at global levels in the business world**. Misguided charity via world scale institutions and the media, and wagon loads of public sympathy generously invoked would hardly touch the fringe.

Delivered to the world more than two and a half millennia ago, and to Sri Lanka via Thera Mahinda a few centuries later, the primary concern of Buddhism is **the regulation and revitalising of interpersonal relationships within the human community**. Nay even with the plant and animal worlds, including also the biota and the ecosystems. That is where Buddhist religious living well and truly begins.

This is why all Buddhist activities, not merely the rituals and ceremonies within and without the temples, which include *pūjās* of all types, to the living and the dead, to the animate and inanimate, begin with the voluntary acceptance and **the pledge to keep and fulfil the basic code of *pañcasīla***.

Precepts of *pañcasīla* embody some of the fundamental human rights of respect for life and respect for property and a great deal more. Read no more and no less than verses 246 and 247 of the Dhammapada to discover the dynamism of this Buddhist approach to social problems. Answers to these **do not lie in prayers to or supplication of forces outside man for favours or forgiveness**. but in the total correction of human attitudes and approaches to the rest of the world in which we live.

The above verses emphatically assert that maladjusted relationships in society lead both to social disruption as well as to personal deterioration and disaster within ourselves, literally digging out the very roots of our existence -- *mūlaṃ khaṇati attano*. Why then **not be morally good, O men and women of all ranks?** On this area of societal considerations or moral goodness in Buddhism, one only needs to be reminded of a very few basic sermons of the Buddha which he appears to have delivered at a very down-to earth congregational level. One is the Veludvāreyya Sutta or the sermon at the Bamboo Gate, preached to the lay community of the Veludvāra village [SN.V. 352-6]. The main theme here **is moral goodness and consequent social harmony** [*sama-cariyā* and *dhamma-cariyā*]. The main thrust of the Buddha's argument here is 'Why not treat society in the same way you would like society to treat you?' This is called *attūpanāyika-dhamma-pariyāya*.

The other is the Sāleyyaka Sutta wherein the Buddha provides us with an almost perfect legal document with which any Buddhist who wishes to regulate and discipline his life on Buddhist lines could do so without any infringement of the Buddhist rules laid down [MN. I. 285-90]. This sutta discusses in detail the rules relating to the ten offences through thought, word and deed - *dasa kamma*

patha. We would call upon all those interested in the study of moral considerations in Buddhism as a religion to take a close and careful look into these two suttas and see their total implications.

Morality or *seḷa* implied therein does not imply a mere negative or exclusively personal purity, unrelated to the world one lives in. Or in relation to the degree of submissiveness one is willing to offer to a divine source we are required to believe to be in existence beyond our world of day to day experience. It is a morality which is integrated to one's community of all that lives which includes man and bird and beast. It is calculated to achieve, more or less, a cosmic harmony. This and this alone shall be the hope of a changing world today, whether it be the territories of less affluent Asia or the more affluent and equally more devastated areas elsewhere - the so-called industrialised and therefore more developed, in the direction of death and destruction.

In the message delivered in Sri Lanka as far back as twenty-three centuries ago, Thera Mahinda did not lose track of his thesis. With the assistance of the text of the C'Ylahatthipadopama Sutta [MN. I. 175-84], Thera Mahinda placed the Buddha on the highest pedestal he deserves to be on, delineated his greatness as the teacher of gods and men and indicated that his path to salvation **led one away from** the world of today's **over-exaggerated mundane pleasure of women, wine and song**. Within a few days this was followed by yet another course of Buddhist instruction. We are told that the Petavatthu and Vimānavatthu provided much material for his sermons to his new converts. We are particularly interested in his choice of the Petavatthu. It is no indication, as far as we feel, of the lack of intellectual maturity of his Sri Lankan audiences, men or women, elite or rustic. The Petavatthu is more vibrantly eloquent and more convincingly vehement as a warning that the neglect and disregard of the moral instructions issued in Buddhism for decent and good living here and now, **could lead one, in one's next life, to a total loss of the prestigious human position which one presently enjoys**. This is the very realistic sense in which the Buddhist concepts of *apāya* and

niraya or the suffering hells are to be viewed. Today's new exponents of the Dhamma seem to witness the existence of these *apāyas* within their own physical bodies.

It is our firm conviction that today, with the expansion of scientific knowledge and development of technology, Buddhism is coming to be more and more correctly understood by a vast majority of non-Buddhists all over the world. This is partly because of their own keen search for truth. Fortunately, good many of them are not misled by digressing and distorting Sri Lankan neo-exponents, monks and laymen, of Buddhism today. These latter, they all insist on their freedom of speech and expression. Let them have it. Human Rightists everywhere are helplessly driven to concede all these, they themselves having blundered on some of these, sometime, somewhere.

Therefore it is a matter of paramount importance that Buddhists themselves make a keener in-depth study of their own religion. They could not possibly be lured by attractive offers of down to earth make-believe material gains of better health, more wealth and greater success. Or even instant Nirvana. Cultic attractions in the garb of religion are becoming extremely menacing all over the world. In Sri Lanka, wonder-workers, both monks and lay persons, playing on the super-natural they can generate, are seen robbing spiritual considerations like *parittas* of their true worth.

Items like medicines and foods are super-charged with *paritta* chanting for greater efficacy. Parittas are now being equally well used by religious leaders to dispossess their opponents of unacceptable decisions. Religious amalgams and alliances are being made to look more attractive and enticing than cocktails served at the bar. They are amazingly hallucinogenic. The saner world is becoming aware of it, except for feeble and fickle-faith ones who are deeply involved and heavily drugged, even after having seen their disastrous ill effects.

In Sri Lanka today, we feel it is not a day too early to systematically plan and

urgently start an honest venture of salvaging this lost treasure of the original message of Buddhism. The Buddha delivered it to the world as an essentially salvation process of enabling saṃsāric beings to seriously commence an earnest journey of moving towards liberation in Nirvana. It can make any sense only to people who have been told the truths about Saṃsāra. If there are long arrays of not very expensive hotels and motels all along the high ways of Sams@ra, one would ask us, why not spend a few long week-ends *en route*. Some times we are told that morally good loving couples can, if they wish, together book and reserve heavenly mansions while still being here.

But Nirvana reaching is not a goal one necessarily reaches after one's physical death in this life. Death in any form, whether as ordinary worldlings or as arahants, does not provide the keys to the gates of Nirvana. One takes charge of them while still living, on becoming arahant, as Buddha Gotama himself did at the age of thirty-five. Not on his death at eighty.

This message of Saṃsāra crossing and reaching Nirvana and the way of doing it in earnest seems to have been delivered in Sri Lanka by Thera Mahinda within the first few days of his arrival in the island. There was nobody here at the time to indicate to him to pull his punches or divert him in other directions. Even his elitist audience at the palace which included women like his sister-in-law Anula among others, had also the necessary wisdom to comprehend the whole truth of Saṃsāra to Nirvana. **Those women, of yester year, undoubtedly, were qualified to lead the way.** They gained the conviction about the truth of *sammā samkappa* or the need to reduce the pursuit of pleasure. Anula, along with five hundred of her friends, decided to renounce the pleasures of the royal household. They moved out of the palace and lived nobly as renunciation-aspirants, awaiting the arrival of Ther¹ Saṅghamitta, the illustrious sister of Thera Mahinda. These are the noble historical models for Sri Lankan women, not to forget and not to lose sight of, if they dare venture into the field, to rescue or salvage Buddhism.

The message of Mahinda is good enough to outlive the lifetime of the world. The fountain from which it has been derived needs no revisionist updating. No authorised or unauthorised emissaries ever need descend to earth to revise the original teachings of Buddhism which are declared as the teachings of all time: *esa dhammo sanantano*. Too many future Buddhas on horizon can be utterly confusing. No new bulletins ever need to be issued advertising the Buddha way. Therefore on this day of the Poson full moon our very kind admonition to our listeners is *Suṇātha dhāretha carātha dhamme* .

Give attention to this teaching. Bear it well in your mind. Live your life in accordance with these for the achievement of your goal.

May all beings be well and happy. May there be peace on earth and goodwill among men.



(3) Poson Beams of June and the Message of Mahinda to Sri Lanka

(Poson 1997)

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

The message of Mahinda turns out to be the most fortunate we Sri Lankans received a little over two thousand three hundred years ago. At that time, during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa, were we very highly cultured or not cultured enough that our pre-Buddhist king of Anuradhapura took to deer hunting as a royal sport. The arrival of Thera Mahinda in Sri Lanka marked a turning point in our history. Within a couple of centuries we were turned away from hunting, both as a sport as well as an avenue for gluttonous eating. Forget not that pre-Buddhist Sri Lanka even had a God-of-the-Hunt or *Vyādhā - deva* whose

abode was a palm tree or *Tāla - rukkha*.

It was by royal decree, a few centuries later, that *mā ghāta* or security to animal life - bird and beast and fish was introduced. Our indebtedness as a country or nation to the source of this inspiration has to remain incalculable for all times. But behold the world today. After more than twenty-three centuries, re-writing of history to serve contemporary needs of religion, politics and ethnicity is seen to be having its disastrous consequences on human life, both here in our native land and elsewhere.

This is indeed the message the whole world today is looking up to, conscious or unconscious of the process of doing so. It is the message of Shakyamuni the Buddha, given to mankind as a whole, with no thoughts of chosen or selected people. This is what earns for Buddhism its honoured title of **Fastest Spreading Religion** in many parts of the world today. At the time it was delivered, it was not meant to be Indo-centric. Within a very short time, overriding barriers of ethnicity or physical terrain, it reached as far west as the Caspian Sea, over today's Middle East regions of Afghanistan, Iran etc. In the north, it traversed over deserts along the ancient Silk Route, reaching China as early as 50 A.D. China, Korea and Japan came under its benign influence, reflecting to the world even today their cultural enrichment under the guidance and inspiration of Buddhism. Think of Japan's *ike bana* or the art of flower arrangement or its rich heritage of landscape gardening.

In the message of Buddhism, the world shall find comfort today in the face of threats of violence both at social and domestic levels, of rape and brutal murders prompted by sex excitement, of pathetic devastation of mankind, at all ages, resulting from Aids, HIV, STD or sexually transmitted diseases. The much debated problems of abortion, fatherless homes and unmarried mothers, witnessed all around us everywhere, could very well be kept at a low ebb, only if sanity prevailed and the words of the Buddha were adequately heeded.

Delivered to the world more than two and a half millennia ago, and to Sri Lanka via Thera Mahinda a few centuries later, the primary concern of Buddhism is the regulation and revitalizing of interpersonal relationships within the human community. That is where Buddhist religious living well and truly begins. This is why all Buddhist activities, not merely the rituals and ceremonies within and without the temples, begin with the voluntary acceptance and the pledge to keep and fulfill the basic code of *pañcasīla*. They embody some of the fundamental human rights of respect for life and respect for property and a great deal more. Read no more and no less than verses 246 and 247 of the Dhammapada to discover the dynamism of this Buddhist approach to social problems. Answers to these lie not in prayer and supplication to forces outside man but in the total correction of human attitudes and approaches.

The above verses emphatically assert that maladjusted relationships in society lead both to social disruption as well as to personal deterioration and disaster, literally digging out the very roots of one's existence -- *mūlaṃ khaṇati attano*. Why then not be morally good? On this area of societal considerations or moral goodness in Buddhism, one only needs to be reminded of a very few basic sermons of the Buddha which he appears to have delivered at a very down-to-earth congregational level. One is the Veludvareyya Sutta or the sermon at the Bamboo Gate, preached to the lay community of the Veludvara village [S.V. 352-6]. The main theme here is moral goodness and consequent moral harmony. The main thrust of the Buddha's argument here is 'Why not treat society in the same way you would like society to treat you? This is called *attūpanāyika dhammapariyāya* or the self-testing method of the worth of moral goodness.

The other is the Saleyyaka Sutta wherein the Buddha provides us with an almost perfect legal document with which any Buddhist who wishes to regulate and discipline his life on Buddhist lines could do so without any infringement of the Buddhist rules laid down [M. I. 285-90]. This sutta discusses in detail the rules relating to the ten offenses through thought, word and deed - *dasa kamma*

patha. We would call upon all those interested in the study of moral considerations in Buddhism as a religion to take a close and careful look into these two suttas and see their total implications. Morality or *sīla* implied therein does not imply a mere negative or exclusively personal purity, unrelated to the world one lives in. It is a morality which is integrated to one's community of all that lives which includes man and bird and beast. It is calculated to achieve, more or less, a cosmic harmony. This and this alone shall be the hope of a changing world today, whether it be the territories of less affluent Asia or the more affluent and equally more devastated areas elsewhere.

In the message delivered in Sri Lanka as far back as twenty-three centuries ago, Thera Mahinda did not lose track of his thesis. With the assistance of the text of the Cullahatthipadopama Sutta [M. I. 175-84], Thera Mahinda placed the Buddha on the highest pedestal he deserves to be on, delineated his greatness as the teacher of gods and men and indicated that his path to salvation led one from the world of mundane pleasure of today's over-exaggerated women, wine and song. Within a few days or weeks, this was followed by yet another course of Buddhist instruction. We are told that the Petavatthu and Vimanavatthu provided much material for his sermons to his new converts. We are particularly interested in his choice of the Petavatthu. It is no indication, as far as we feel, of the lack of intellectual maturity of his Sri Lankan audiences. The Petavatthu is more eloquent and more vehement as a warning that the neglect and disregard of the moral instructions issued in Buddhism which could lead one in one's next life, to a total loss of the prestigious human position which one presently enjoys. This is the very realistic sense in which the Buddhist concepts of *apāya* and *niraya* are to be viewed.

It is our firm conviction that today, with the expansion of scientific knowledge and development of technology, Buddhism is coming to be more and more correctly understood by a vast majority of non-Buddhists. This is partly because of their own keen search for truth. Therefore it is a matter of paramount

importance that Buddhists themselves make a keener in-depth study of their own religion. They could not possibly be lured by attractive offers of down to earth make believe material gains of better health, more wealth and greater success. Cultic attractions in the garb of religion are becoming extremely menacing all over the world. Wonder-workers are seen robbing spiritual considerations of their true worth. Religious amalgams and alliances are being made to look more attractive and enticing than cocktails served at the bar. They are amazingly hallucinogenic. The world is becoming aware of it, except a few who are deeply involved and heavily drugged, often having seen their disastrous ill effects.

The message of Mahinda has been good enough to outlive the lifetime of the world. The fountain from which it has been derived needs no revisionist updating. No authorized or unauthorized emissaries ever descend to earth to revise the original teachings of Buddhism which are declared as the teachings of all time: *esa dhammo sanantano*. No new bulletins ever need to be issued. Therefore on this day of the Posen full moon our very kind admonition to our readers is *Suṇātha dhāretha carātha dhamme*. Give attention to this teaching. Bear it well in your mind. Live your life in accordance with it.

May all beings be well and happy. May there be peace on earth and goodwill among men.



(4) Prepare For Action in the New Millennium or Cross the River and Not Merely Run Along Its Bank

(Poson 1999)

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

In six more months from now, i.e. in December 1999, the twentieth century sadly comes to its end and along with it the second millennium. New things always excite us, because of the invariable changes they bring along with them. But we rarely sense them and much less ask ourselves whether we are ready for them. To be prepared for necessary changes and be able to quickly adapt ourselves to them would undoubtedly lend grace to our life process.

As far back as August 1979, a very distinguished personality from the United Nations gave us Sri Lankans a hint about the advent of the new millennium. That was Rafaelo M. Salas, the population expert of the UN. He was a Filipino by nationality and a Roman Catholic by religion. He was being honoured with a D. Lit. by the University of Colombo. On that occasion, in the course of his Convocation address, the late Dr. Salas gently reminded us that we Sri Lankans should, on the advent of the third millennium, give to the world a birthday gift. He was a Roman Catholic. But as an eminent world citizen he had discovered the Sri Lankan identity.

With remarkable sincerity and great magnanimity, he told his audience that twenty-five centuries ago there lived in India a wise old man. Dr. Salas picked up with great discretion one of his sayings and with no reservations offered it to the Sri Lankans, requesting them to deliver it to the world at the advent of the third millennium. We are sad that Dr. Salas passed away more than a decade ago. It is also sad that the Vice-chancellor who officiated at this Convocation, a dear old friend, is no more with us.

Does anybody remember this incident of twenty years ago or appreciate its worth? What did Dr. Salas give us and from where did he gather it? His great discovery was the verse no. 336 of the Dhammapada. Here is its English rendering, derived from the translation of Venerable Narada Maha Thera.

Whoso in the world overcomes this base unruly craving,
from him sorrows fall away like water-drops from a lotus-leaf.

*Yo ce tam sahate jammim taṅham loke duraccayam
Sokā tamhā papatanti udabindū ' va pokkharā.*

Why I pick up this theme in particular to write on during this Poson season is for two reasons. Poson is the season during which we got the message of Buddhism into our midst. It is this message in its totality which gave Sri Lanka a completely new orientation. Dr. Salas wanted us to deliver at least a part of it to the world, at a time when the world is believed to need it most. Let everyone in this country be reminded as to what this message meant to us, in spite of treacherous attempts at times to underrate it.

In Sri Lanka, the rulers of the land who succeeded Devanampiya Tissa into whose hands the message was delivered, began to feel in all sincerity the need to respect the worth of the new message received. It was symbolic of what in human history civilization and culture meant. It contained all the ingredients for decency and decorum in the human society. It put to the fore concepts like compassion and justice. In the policies our rulers formulated to govern the land over which they presided, they prided in reflecting the spirit of Buddhism. All rulers felt the adequacy of Buddhism in the governance of the country, and they looked up to the Cakkavatti as their ideal. Law and order in the land had to be established and maintained, as of old, in terms of the principles of the *pañcasīla*, unhesitatingly conceding respect for all life both human and animal, respect for legitimately owned property and mutual respect for the genders. Knowing through Buddhist teachings what they needed to know about statecraft, to guide their people to peace and prosperity, about state administration [*rājabhaṭa*], agriculture [*kasikamma*], industry [*kammanta*] and trade [*vanijja*], the rulers did not need to seek such wisdom from elsewhere. Fortunately, Buddhism at that time was certainly no 'pearls before swine'.

In terms of Buddhist thinking, the Cakkavatti is required to provide security in

the land, not only to those connected to the royal household, but also to all inhabitants of the land [*negama-jānapadesu*], the high and the low as well as the rich and the poor. Under his protective umbrella came also the animals: the birds, beasts and the fish [*rakkhāvaraṇaguttim sanvidahati migapakkhīsu*]. The security in the land then was good enough for a young girl to go, with a jewel in her hand, from any part of the country to another, without any harassment. Sri Lankan inscriptions of the 12 th century testify to this.

Buddhism, in its wake, brought all these to the land. There was sensible and meaningful utilization, but not exploitation of resources like earth, water and forests. Buddhism from its earliest history in India knew of self-grown forests [*jāta-vana*] and planted forests [*ropita-vana*] even in the vicinity of big cities like Rajagaha.

We also have to honour the request made to us by Dr. Salas to redirect the message of Buddhism to a needy world, at the dawn of the new millennium. He was aware that the Buddha was perhaps the earliest with this message to the world. The Buddha's magnanimity and generosity knew no petty limitations of chosen people. As a citizen of the world, Dr.Salas was keenly aware of humanity's quest for happiness. We as humans all look forward to a greater degree of happiness [*sukha-kāmā*] and a minimum of grief and distress [*dukkha-paṭikkūlā*]. Let us not forget the social and individual dimension of this noble thinking. He pin-pointed from the Dhammapada the need to overpower this disastrous human weakness of greed or craving. Call it by whatever other name you like, this underlies all violence in the world which makes human hearts to bleed and human eyes to tear.

Today the world is plagued with a narrowly limited supremacist tendency in terms of religion, ethnicity and political thinking. Victory at any cost is the rule of the day. Along the communication high way we get news relating to these all the time. Peep into your web sites now and again. What is being perpetrated on a larger scale all the time at world level is no more a secret. This is not to say that

Sri Lanka is out of it. Here it is indeed a dog fight, with vociferous claims from all sides for larger and larger shares all the time. A solution is clearly unimaginable when the claimants are openly backed and supported by diverse heterogeneous groups who have private interests to serve. It is neither the interests of the people nor of the land. We do not consider it wise political thinking in any sense of the word. It is for the party or the person. We urgently need today a collectivist philosophy, throwing into the garbage bin the party manifestos and the claims of personal efficiency based on vastness of academic learning, clan superiority or political tutelage.

Let us look for persons with clean, or at least cleaner, human hearts. This is where Buddhism's anthropocentrism comes up once again. Let us address our prayers to the hearts of men and women and even of the children. The so-called *devas*, i.e. divine elements of varying grades, terrestrial or celestial, should step in only when the humans deserve what they ask for. If these divines have their own private interests to serve their own ends or their party ends, we would do well to leave them alone and choose to meet them at a later date, elsewhere. Let us not damage the cause of humans by meaninglessly involving the divines with them, with prayers and supplications. This would only provide, unwittingly though, an opportunity for humans to massacre humans. What a diabolic use of the concept of divinity. It would be as bad as bribing officers of the law-enforcement-authority or attempting to canvass persons in the noble profession of the judiciary, no matter which group does it.

Now to come back to the title with which we started, namely prepare for action in the new millennium. As we now arrive at the end of the century, viewing before us also the new millennium round the corner, we have to ask ourselves whether humanity is honest in its dealings with fellow humans. Many learned men in the world with a seriousness of purpose are beginning to be doubtful about this. As Dr. Salas perhaps had gained the conviction, it is here that each one of us has to turn inwards and take an honest look at our selves. Then, with

the degree of honesty within us, we are bound to discover that it is self-interest and self-gain which drive us to many of the so-called welfare activities. We wish to glorify our selves as individuals or boost and build up the power of the larger and smaller institutions to which we belong or owe our loyalties. These invariably come within the three groupings to which we have already referred earlier, namely religious, ethnic and political.

Viewing this situation from the religious or spiritual angle of Buddhism, all this what we would honestly label as aberrant thinking spring from an exaggerated notion of selfhood. With a concept of heaven granted self within us, by whatever name you call it, we elevate our selves to precariously staggering heights. Were not the World Wars I and II, within this polluted twentieth century, fought on account of such misdirected thinking. Where do the Allies of World War II who tenaciously fought against the Axis powers of Hitler and Mussolini stand today. Did not the variable identities of individuals and groups soon shift their positions and change overnight to get the Russian block [for which Joseph Stalin stood] out of the picture, to be identified as a dreadful enemy?

To pull oneself out of such groupings and think independently, we admit, is easier said than done. That is why the Buddha declared, almost before commencing his missionary career, that Buddhism's spiritual culture is an up stream swim [*paṭisota-gāmiṃ*] and that those who are too deeply steeped in greed and attachment will never see the truth of this [*Rāga-rattā na dakkhinti tamokkhandhena āvaṭā*].

At least the dawn of a new millennium should awaken us from our slumber. For this defaulting, mankind has paid too high a price. Greed and attachment, resulting from too much of disastrous ego and selfhood, drive us through labyrinthian death traps of competition, status, national pride, economic successes, religious uniqueness etc. Think of the treacherous atomic power racing in our own neighbourhood, in spite of the bitter and painful lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We believe a step in the right direction of ego reduction must come through an awareness of what the saner world of today tries to visualize in the concepts of restraint and discipline. The Buddha recommended these as virtues twenty-five centuries ago under *samyama* and *dama*. Psychologists world over now speak of these as necessary ingredients in the culture of growing up children. In this move towards restraint and discipline in the new millennium to come, both for the love of ourselves and those around us, we wish to plead with our fellow Sri Lankans, the Buddhists in particular, to take just one step forward, if you like.

From this Poson Full moon day of 1999, on the like of which more than twenty-three centuries ago the first enrichment of Sri Lankan life commenced with the reverberating message of Thera Mahinda, let us Sri Lankans observe one vegetarian day in the week, choosing to abstain from anything which has its origin in the pain, exploitation or death of a sentient fellow creature.

Thank you.

May all beings be well and happy: *Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā.*



(5) Work - A Socio-Economic Analysis with a Relevant Buddhist Point of View

(Bak 2006)

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

We would look upon work as what humans are engaged in during their life time, activated through thought, word and deed. As Buddhists, we would bundle all these, in terms of their origin, as *kāya-kamma*, *vaci-kamma* and *mano-kamma*. This is the wide range of ten-fold human activity and are referred to in Buddhist studies as *dasa-kamma-patha*. Philosophically speaking, Buddhists

maintain that all these activities are based on motivations. The Buddha is said to have declared *Cetanā'ham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi. Cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyen vācāya manasā* [AN.III.415]. It means: I declare, O monks, action to be really the motive or intention behind it. Having thought out, one acts through thought, word and deed. This is a vital point to remember that all good and bad things in Buddhism are essentially bound up with the integrated processes of mind and body or the physical and the mental of each individual, without any directions or dictates from an external source.

Work, in the world of day to day living, has to be undertaken and carried out for several obvious reasons. In the world, work pertains to the area of man, and today to the area of machines as well. Machines work under the direction of man but soon robots will get ahead of him and perhaps, in the field of work, give meaningful directions to him. In relation to animals, with horses, oxen and elephants, man will continue to maintain his lead. Animals act and do things under the direction of humans, by way of built-in reflexes. Their survival is guaranteed by such behaviour. In hunger and thirst, in fear and anger, animals react on this basis. Man who has, more or less, the exclusive possession of reason and judgement, decides as to the [propriety of] time and manner of action. Buddhist teachings attribute this to the higher grade of development of the human brain, at the higher level of primates, well above reptilian and mammalian. Buddhist texts say *Manassa ussannatāya manussā* [VvA. 18 & KhA. 123]. Humans are called *manussa* on account of the higher grade development [*ussannatā*] of their mind [= *mana / manasa*].

Therefore in human society, we discover men and women purposefully and meaningfully engaged in work. They are motivated to work for various reasons. There are personal individual reasons like child rearing, health care and family economic development. There are also collective social reasons. The outcome of work gives joy in different ways. Work leads to the fulfilment of diverse expectations. Everyone discovers all the time defects and deficiencies in one's

life and in the world on lives in. Life is discovered to be a continuous process of rectifying, correcting these shortfalls. In illness one takes measures to regain one's health. Healthy ones regularly keep grooming themselves, clipping and dressing their hair, exercising and massaging their limbs, sometimes even adding lustre and colour to their skin. These acts are not remunerative. One might be called upon to pay another for getting various services in these areas. But in the process of doing these one earns no income. People still do them. One would therefore classify activities of this nature as non-remunerative or as work which is self-satisfying and self-gratifying.

Extending beyond this very personal range of activity, there also exists a range of work which serves the needs of family build-up. These like building places of residence, growing food for family needs, providing adequate means for family safety and security like putting up fences and walls around homes, are all musts of family life in human communities. With excessive modernisation, urbanisation and mechanisation, many people seem to lose sight of some of these unquestionably basic and vital needs. Too many people expect their larger controlling bodies like central governments or local municipalities to be responsible for these. This is what leads to the shameless and complete breakdown of municipal cleanliness, with heavily garbage-dumped lanes in pompous residential areas of metropolitan Colombo and other big cities.

But all these work contributions, it must be remembered, when they have a home-born domestic origin contribute immensely to the generation of that indispensable nutrient of family harmony which goes by the name of love. Or philanthropy, if the word love is too explosive today. Even if this kind of life style looks a going back to less developed socio-economic structures, they certainly are to be looked upon as contributing to far greater social integration and social solidarity than today's tailor-made matter of fact living.

In a pre-war [World War II] Sri Lanka, even as far back as sixty seventy years ago, this kind of activity was undertaken at a joint inter-familial level. They were

known to people in the villages under the name of *kayya*. We recollect with joy how in a delightful participatory spirit, with a lot of food and drinks within reach, people of the then delightful country side, assembled almost at sunrise to launch such mutually beneficial projects in the village. Sometimes these extended from the inter-familial to entire regional levels, embracing such activities like tree planting, cleaning up village tanks or even giving a face-lift to the village school. In Buddhist thinking, this kind of activity is looked upon as just or mutually-good living [*dhammatthā*]. The Samyutta Ni kaya [SN. 1. 33] lists these activities as planting of fruit and shade trees [*ārāma-ropā vana-ropā*], building bridges [*setu-kārakā*], providing drinking-water on road sides [*papañ ca upānañ ca*]. In highly developed countries like Canada and the USA, even today, the protection and guarding of residential areas is organised on this basis of collective responsibility and magnanimous participation. The organisation of their **Neighbourhood Watch Areas** in their cities is a good example.

Let us now move into another area where work is attractive for a different reason. Work is remunerative. Work is also productive and brings in wealth in its wake. Money [*dhanā*] and wealth [*bhoga*] are great attractions in life. They provide comfort [*sukha*] and joy [*pīti*]. In terms of Buddhist analyses, work can be viewed as remunerative employment. This can be put under two broad categories of self-employment and employment under others. Working for others includes both the state and the private sector. We discover here that work and money are closely tied up. Money through work comes as either as wages or remuneration for work done or as productive income generated through what has been produced.

In all these areas, one could begin with the question 'What prompts people to work?' Each one in the human community has and feels **an awareness of a civic responsibility** one owes to the family or the community to which one belongs. [The sooner it is implanted in case of its absence, the better it is for the society in which such individuals are found.]. Every member of the human

community, man or woman, has primarily to feel his personal identity. It is his or her parents and the values acquired through each religion which must sensitise them to this. It is our considered opinion that it is the lamentable failure in this area that leads to the staggering rise in suicides in this country, particularly in the category of juveniles. The abominable crimes of incest and rape in this country, in recent years, must be traced back to such pathological states. Once a person knows his or her personal identity, such a person has always to be placed in his or her correct position in the home and society. It must be as precisely fitted as part and the whole. That is the correct slot in which one must find oneself. Then he knows himself, his parents, his wife and children [if any], friends and relatives, and those who toil for him. These social relationships cannot be forgotten or violated. One who knows this also knows his obligations towards all these human components in whose midst he lives. The fulfilment of all these immediately raises the need for money. The Anguttara Nikaya, in a special chapter entitled *bhogānaṃ ādiyā* [AN. III. 45] discusses in detail these different areas in which money is to be profitably utilised. We shall take them in due course.

In the first category of self-employment referred to above, one gets the money through production, as a result of energetic application to various areas of activity [*kammante payojeyyā*] such as agriculture, animal husbandry or industry. It is even wisely suggested in authentic Buddhist texts that where one does not possess enough capital to start on any such venture, that one could get the necessary money on loan, with interest or *vaḍḍhi* [... *yaṃ pi bhikkhave daḷiddo assako anāliko iṇaṃ ādiyitvā vaḍḍhim paṭisunivā ... & ... vaḍḍhiṃ paṭisunivā kālābhatam vaḍḍhiṃ na deti ...* [Both at AN. III. 352]. This idea of getting money on loan for useful and benevolent ventures, with interest is further explained as *iṇaṃ ādāyā ' ti vaḍḍhiyā dhanam gahetvā* at DA. I. 212] or interest free, and then proceed.

Whatever may be the mode of employment [self-employment or any other], it is emphatically indicated everywhere that earning money must be **via righteous**

and justifiable means which is qualified with phrases like *dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi bhogehi* which is further qualified with *sedāvakkhittēhi bāhā-bala-paricitehi* which mean `with the sweat of one's brow and the strength of one's arms' [AN. III. 45 & 76]. If self-employment were in trade, Buddhist texts indicate many areas in which sales are viewed with disfavour and are virtually banned. AN. III. 208 lists them as sale of 1. weapons of death and destruction [*sattha*], 2. living things [*satta*], i.e. animals, and perhaps humans like slaves included therein. The Commentary takes this to include humans only: *satta-vanijjā ' ti manussa-vikkayo'* [AA. III. 303], 3. flesh of animals [*maṃsa*], i.e. fish and meat. [Having twisted *satta* in 2 to mean humans only, the Commentary has now to twist *maṃsa* which means flesh or meat to mean `sale of meat yielding animals like swine and deer': *maṃsa-vanijjā ' ti sūkara-migādayo posetvā tesam vikkayo.* ibid.], 4. alcohol and drugs [*majja*], i.e. anything that leads to drunkenness or loss of sane judgement and 5. poisonous substances [*visa*], whether at personal individual level or at collective national level as material for chemical warfare. In terms of items 1, 4 and 5, we would consider these Buddhist injunctions as incredibly accurate anticipations of the diabolic world-wide transactions we witness today: whether they be the underworld arms deals of super powers, large-scale illicit drug peddling from Mexico, Marseilles or Myanmar or the enormous outpouring of alcohol, produced legally and with state approval in the face of resultant disasters or illegally produced by our own slum-dwellers as well as by protected tycoons.

It is in view of these inestimably calamitous ill effects that come in the wake of such processes of earning money, whether by individuals or by the state as we witness today, that the concept of justifiability or righteousness of those processes [or the quality of *dhammika* or *dhamma-laddha* of monies so obtained] is insisted on in Buddhist social ethics. Having safeguarded this aspect of wealth production in terms of justifiability, Buddhist texts go further to clarify as to how these monies should be meaningfully utilised. Buddhists nowhere envisage a money-hoarding society. In a chapter entitled Uses of Wealth or *bhogānaṃ*

ādiyā, the Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 45 f.] spell out five different ways in which one's wealth or earnings may be profitably and meaningfully spent. Such expenditure, deliberately carried out with careful planning, is held out as rewarding and as leaving no room for regrets [*a + vippaṭisāro*].

These five different modes of expenditure deserve closer analysis and careful study both for their magnanimity and philanthropy as well as their social comprehensiveness. The very first mode in terms of which one's well earned income is to be spent [*uṭṭhāna-viriyādhigatehi bhogehi bāhābala-paricitehi sedāvakkhittehi dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi loc. cit*] embraces the family as a totally comprehensive unit, reckoning very much in the manner of the Sigāla Sutta [DN. III. 180-193] with every component which contributes to its successful running. It is as if they were conscious of the necessity of total integration of the diverse segments of the larger family web into a realistic whole, almost to the extent the NASA scientists are concerned with the totality of the infinite components of a space-shuttle. Unless this co-ordination in social integration is guaranteed to the same extent as at NASA, family life of humans will never record a successful take off. Even with repeated replacement of engines or parts thereof, they will never be off the ground.

The first block which centres round the family consists of 1. the originator of the income. He unquestionably gets the first place, with priority over everybody else. The very motivation to work and earn is the acquisition and possession of personal comfort and joy. Therefore above everything else, the originator of income must make himself [*attānaṃ*] comfortable [*sukheti*] and happy [*piṇeti*]. 2. Next come parents or *mātā-pitaro* [and very rightly so]. Everybody starts with one's own parents, well before the arrival of wife and children on the scene. 3. Wife and children take their place third, together with the household work-staff [*puttadāra-dāsa-kammakāra-porise*]. It is to be noted with admiration that the household staff are included among the beneficiaries of family income. Their very specific contribution to the sum total of family well-being appears to be strictly

and honestly recognised [See AN. III. 45 f.]. Elsewhere [AN. III. 77], even a more distantly connected section of the labour force in one's service, and therefore contributing to one's prosperity, are brought in to be included among such beneficiaries [... *sakkaroti garukaroti māneti pūjetī*]. They are referred to as working hands engaged in fields and factories or in agricultural and industrial pursuits [*khetta-kammanta-sāmanta-samvohāre*].

People are also motivated to work because they wish to spend some part of what they earn in the process for the benefit of their friends and dear ones [*mittāmacce*]. This constitutes the second block. People are equally aware of the need for security against calamities and misadventures like natural disasters of floods and fires, threats from violence [*yā tā honti āpadā aggito vā udakato vā rājato vā corato vā appiyato vā dāyādato* AN. III. 45]. This provides the third motivation. History of the human community, viewed globally, shows that they are not totally bereft of or insensitive to what would be termed social and religious obligations. These certainly belong to an area which is well outside mere materialistic considerations. This fourth group consists of one's obligation to provide for *a.* one's kinsmen [*ñāti-balī*], *b.* one's guests [*atithi-balī*], *c.* obligations towards the dead in one's community [*pubba-peta-balī*], *d.* the payment of state dues [*rāja-balī*] and *e.* religiously guided duties like obligations towards the gods [*deva- or devatā-balī*]. This is the fourth source of motivation.

The fifth and the last division in this study of uses of one's earnings, or viewing it differently, as prompting for people to work whereby one gathers wealth, we have the generous provision of material needs [*udhaggikaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ paṭiṭṭhāpetī*] for the benefit of the religious community who, by their own good example, could adequately provide the desirable spiritual leadership to the community [*Ye te smaṇa-brāhmaṇā mada-ppamādā paṭiviratā khanti-soracce niviṭṭha ekaṃ attānaṃ damenti ekaṃ attānaṃ samenti ekaṃ attānaṃ parinibbāpentī*. op. cit.]. The use in this context of words like *sovaggikaṃ* [heaven-bound], *sukha-vipākaṃ* [resulting in happiness] very much highlights the

popular concern for a happy and prosperous life after death [... *sovaggikaṃ sukhavipākaṃ sagga-saṃvattanikaṃ*]. While this consideration could be regarded as yet another attractive incentive to push people to energetic engagement in work, it also turns out to be equally propelling towards spiritual growth.



Humans and Their Daily Life in the World

(6) Lending and Borrowing Money in Times of Need

(Bak 2006)

Professor Dhammavihari Thera

To one who has not left his household life as a mendicant in quest of the religious goal of Nibbana, poverty is indeed a cause of grief. Poverty means that one possesses only a little or nothing at all called one's own [*assako*]; one is not affluent and in plenty [*anāḷhiko*]; one has to be constantly in debt to others, borrowing money [*iṇaṃ ādiyati*] on the promise of repayment, with or without interest [*vaḍḍhiṃ paṭisuṇāti*]. The precise statement of this whole idea in Pali in the Buddhist texts occurs in the Anguttara Nikaya as follows: *Dāḷiddiyaṃ bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino' ti? Evaṃ bhante. Yam'pi bhikkhave daḷiddo assako anāḷhiko iṇaṃ ādiyati iṇadānam' pi bhikkhave dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino' ti. ... Iti kho bhikkhave dāḷiddiyam ' pi dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino iṇadānam ' pi vaḍḍhi pi... codanā ' pi anucariyā ' pi bandhanam ' pi dukkhaṃ lokasmim kāmabhogino* [AN. III. 351.f.]

Buddhist thinking also closely scrutinises the presence and absence of wellness in the human community. Buddhism does not turn its back on the

happiness of the man of the world or the success or failure of his living. Nor does it explain its absence in society as the outcome of divine misanthropy or heavenly vengeance. Buddhists do not pray to anybody above or across for the daily gift of food and shelter. They must necessarily be acquisitions out of one's own endeavour and enterprise. We refer to it as *uṭṭhānādhigataṃ dhanaṃ* or wealth as the result of diligent striving.

Buddhist thinking knows a layman as being caught up in ramified relationships with persons and institutions. It also knows that to put himself in a meaningful and acceptable position in society, man needs the means, i.e. wealth and property [*dhana* and *bhoga*].

In the analysis of the concept of happiness of man which in the Buddhist texts is referred to under the term *sukha*, two major points emerge. The first is the possession of adequate means of livelihood, i.e. money and material [*bhoga* and *dhana*]. This is the concept of ***atthi-sukha***. This is literally the basis of the neo-political concept of ***haves***, as against ***have-nots***. The second of these is to the profitable and meaningful use of these means, leading to the comfort and satisfaction of a wide range of human beings who are integrated in diverse ways into what we call society. This is ***bhoga-sukha*** or joy or pleasure of consumption. We feel that this point is very justifiably highlighted because many humans appear not to know the way to achieve happiness through the means at their disposal. Possession, merely by itself, seems to override the concept of pleasurable consumption and utilisation.

In this study, we are primarily taking up the third in the series, namely ***anaṇa-sukha***. That is the joy of being free from debt in one's living process. The last in this four-fold division is ***ana-vajja-sukha*** or happiness faultlessly derived. This is the ultimate yardstick of not being liable to be blamed in any area of life, such as religious, social or cultural. It must be conceded at the very outset that the idea of debt resulting from borrowing or getting money from others on loan could be assessed differently by different people in different contexts. In the larger context

of the world today it has numerous implications, social, political and economic. In the Buddhist texts too, its social and economic considerations would, to a great extent, be determined by the Indian background in which it is placed. We have already pointed out the necessity of the basic needs of sustenance, i.e. *bhoga* and *dhana*. The general world conditions being what they are, anywhere, there appear on the scene the two groups of *haves* and *have-nots*, labelled as rich and poor. They are the *dhanika* or *dhanavanta* on the one hand and the *dalidda* on the other. A debt is incurred when the have-nots obtain, on loan, money from those who have, in order that they may live, i.e. obtain their food and clothing [*ghāsa-cchādana*]. These are basic needs that one cannot do without. They are one's minimum requirements. That is why the Buddhist texts refer to them as *ghāsa-cchādana-paramatā*. The inability to meet this demand is given as one motive for crime in society.

In the Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta, a man who is accused of stealing, actually gives as the reason for doing so, his inability to make a living. He says O Lord, I am unable to live: *na hi deva jīvāmīti* [DN. III. 65]. This being so, the debtor and creditor become part of an almost recognised institution. Their relationship to each other is determined by more or less accepted codes of ethics. Borrowing money on this basis implies a contract which is to be honoured. A breach of this makes the debtor liable to a social stigma. According to the Vasala Sutta in the Suttanipāta [Sn. v.120], a man who borrows money but refuses to pay it back on being pressed by the creditors, and runs away, saying that he owes them no money, is to be looked upon as a socially despicable fellow. The Āmagandha Sutta [Ibid. v. 246] too, frowns upon such breach of contract under the term *iṇaghāta-sūcakā*.

On the other hand, we also find the lot of the debtor viewed with sympathy and consideration. Sometimes it is pitiable, for the man in debt can constantly be harassed by his creditors. Phrases like *dhanikehi pīlito* [harassed by the creditor] or *cujjamāno* [being pursued and charged] are very expressive of such situations.

To be able to pay back a loan and redeem oneself of a debt is looked upon as being a source of great joy. This is the joy of *ānaṇya*, as the Sāmaññaphala Sutta [DN. I. 73] calls it about a poor man getting money on loan. The Anguttara Nikaya [AN. III. 351 f.] says that being in debt can bring a series of unhappy situations in its wake. Borrowing money or *inādāna* itself is no pleasant task. To be called upon to pay interest from time to time - *kālābhatam vadḍhim* - can be equally irksome. The failure to pay interest would bring reproach [*codanā*] and prosecution [*anucariyā*] and a debtor could finally end up in being jailed [*bandhana*] for non-settlement of his debt. Ultimately all these miseries are traced back to poverty which is a tragedy in the life of the householder which is to be averted.

But one has to steer clear of these two situations, of calculated defaulting in non-payment of loans and being unsympathetically harassed by creditors. A loan must be made use of as an economic aid, an economic stabiliser, as a prop to financial needs. To steady the relationship between supply and demand in money matters. Buddhist suttas describe this phenomenon with great insight.

The system of resorting to loans, if it is to be economically sound and defensible, the money so obtained must be profitably invested - *inaṃ ādāya kammante payojeyya*. It must be wise investment too, capable of yielding profitable results - *te kammantā samijjheyyuṃ*. It is the surplus after paying back the original debts which becomes the money ready for spending. That, one is able to spend without reservations and restrictions. There in lies the joy of economic freedom. Thus the Sāmaññaphala Sutta [DN. I. 71 f.] runs: "I formerly, after contracting a loan, set some affairs going, and these affairs of mine succeeded so that I paid off those original debts, and have surplus over with which to maintain a wife. He, from this source would obtain joy, he would reach gladness."

One thing clearly emerges from the discussion we have had so far. It is work and diligent application to work which is the key to success. The concept of this

success is that a man is able to make himself happy and give an equal share of happiness to those around him [... *attānaṃ sukheti piṇeti sammā sukhaṃ pariharati mātāpitaro ...puttadāra-dāsa-kammakāporise sukheti piṇeti* AN. III.45]. This brings before us a picture of closely knitted society with persons occupying places in diverse relations to one another. Two things are equally pronounced in this social organisation. On the one hand, there is the diversity of relationships. Each group of persons mentioned in these contexts seems to hold a position which is either socially inherited like mother and father or wife and children or professionally assigned like workmen and artisans.

There is also, on the other, the fact of their being harmoniously co-ordinated. Each one, with a dignity of one's own and a sense of mutual assistance and public service, serves the community at large. It is for the efficient maintenance of this network of services and relationships that the Sigālovāda Sutta [DN.III.188ff.] prescribes the practice of *disānamassana* or saluting the six directions. This continuously drives home the point that the respectful recognition of the services rendered by the different groups in the community is an essential ingredient for efficient functioning of that society. Even the salutation to the so-called menial group - *dāsakammakarā* - is a must in the social formula recommended to Sigāla.

In addition to this recognition which is a matter of attitudes, working people are also entitled, according to Buddhist social considerations, to monetary and material assistance like food and wages, referred to as *bhatta-vetanaṃ*, for the enhancement of their own happiness. Right down from the time of the Buddha, these instructions with regard to work and working people seem to have been held in high esteem. The Mahavamsa records their being implemented by King Duṭṭhagāmanī during the construction of the Ruvanvaliseya in Anuradhapura. But in the hands of lexicographers of today, Sri Lankans are missing a great deal of it. They see today in words like *bhatta-vetana* which means daily free food supplies to the workers and monthly wages [recorded in Pali as *devasikaṃ*

bhattañ ca māsikam paribbayañ ca] no more than 'wages for food', rendered in Sinhala as *bhataṭa avaśya vaṭup*. These blunders take place in the hands of the intellectual elite of this country and they go undetected. The damage they do to the culture of this country is incalculable. In the case of money spent in this wise it is said to be a legitimate and justifiable expenditure, on the part of the employer, whether private or state. It is also a rewarding expenditure in terms of the goodwill of the workmen the employer gains. It is said to be a commendable expenditure of the hard-earned money: *pattagataṃ āyatanaso paribhuttaṃ*[AN. II. 67 ff.].

Assuming that in a sensibly organised social set up there is adequate employment for people, each according to his efficiency and capability whereby they could make a comfortable living for themselves, the need for lending and borrowing would be reduced to a minimum. When one is ultimately driven to it, it should only be a short-term remedial measure. It should never become a gambler's short cut to earning quick money and spending it away unmindful of one's limitations. One whose financial position is not adequately sound at a particular point of time, seeks to get a loan to bridge a financial gap. But one must always keep in mind one's ability to pay back the loan with ease and within a reasonable length of time. Getting money on loan has to be a serious business, mindful of the need to safeguard one's honour in its repayment, according to agreed terms.

On the other hand, there is every possibility that an over-organised system of providing loans could generate a class of eternally idle hands or suicidal spend-thrifts. This requires a well-cultivated and seriously guarded awareness of spending within one's means. Competition in the direction of social escalation, to do one better than one's neighbour, has often been the cause of utter ruination of both metropolitan as well as suburban agricultural communities in the country side. We consider that banks would do well to set up their own advisory committees to discuss with their loan applicants the extent of the loans applied

for, the purposes for which they are intended to be used and feasible conditions of repayment. Unborn grand-children, generations down the line, should not become liable to pay such loans. Seventy eighty years ago, grand parents were known to be able to leave behind for their children and their children's children something of a heritage, not only financial, but also cultural and spiritual.

In spite of all planning for effective employment and generating economic productivity in the land, there is every possibility, as the Buddhist texts envisage, of economic crises, both at domestic and at state levels. Under the designation of legitimate or commendable expenditure - *āyatanaso paribhutta* - referred to earlier, there is provision for investment for use in such adversity. A scheme of insurance against lean times, the Buddhists had known very early. This is what they had in mind when they prescribed that a fourth of one's income should be safely deposited away for use in times of adversity - *catutthañ ca nidhāpeyya āpadāsu bhavissati*

In many instances, such a system of economic security, well-conceived before hand, would prevent a man from precipitously running into debt. The Anguttara Nikaya beautifully sums up the wisdom of such planning which would save him from the stigma and pain of being in debt in the following: "... with that wealth he makes himself secure against all misfortunes whatsoever, such as may happen by way of fire, water, kings, robbers or ill-disposed heirs to that wealth. He takes steps for his defence, he makes himself secure." [See Anguttara Nikaya III. 45 under *bhogānaṃ ādiyā*].

But in the world today, where men and money are concerned, together with their earning and spending, let us take a fresh look to see where we stand. Our religious teachings of Buddhism were delivered to us more than twenty-five centuries ago, at a time when today's disastrous tidal wave of consumerism, ingeniously manipulated by business tycoons world over, had not struck our shores. It is interesting to note the very simple and down to earth Buddhist instructions about spending one's earnings. *Ekena bhoge bhuñjeyya dvīhi*

kammaṃ payojaye catutthañ ca nidhāpeyya āpadāsu bhavissatī runs the old refrain with regard to domestic budgeting. It simply means: 'Live on one fourth of your income, engaged in your eating and drinking. Use one half of your income to enhance your earning capacity. The last one fourth should be set apart as the basis of security for all disastrous happenings.'

But today, has not the philosophy of living so drastically changed to enrich and fatten the business world? This has been so cleverly introduced into our midst that most of us bend down so low to believe that it our bounden duty to do so.



(7) Full Moon Poya Day Sermon on 19-02-2000

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

Greetings to our listeners on the second full moon day in the new era. Let me begin by wishing everyone of you greater strength and a great deal more courage in the new century and the new millennium for the successful pursuit of the resolves you have made for your social and spiritual advancement. I believe you have already made them. When I use the word **your**, I have in mind its widest connotation, a **your** in all its dimensions to include men, women and children of all ethnic groups and of all religious denominations. They all matter to me. It is then and then alone that I can speak of Sri Lanka as a total unit and speak of its growth and development to be an internationally healthy unit. And in the process, be a model and an example on our own worth to the rest of the world.

My subject for you today is decadence of morals in human society, in Sri Lanka as well as elsewhere.

First and foremost, we must get this vision of what Sri Lanka can give to the world as a whole, with regard to the value scales which it is very badly in need of today. This is particularly so because of the staggering advances science and technology is making in the world everywhere. All these developments have economic priorities which make human values recede to the background. Behind all these, the person who matters is the entrepreneur, the man or woman who sets in motion vast projects. Governments everywhere are necessarily proud of them.

To begin with, in the world today they have misleading glamorous exteriors, labeled as developmental. They are also backed by equally attractive mantles called industrial and scientific. But none of these, we know for certain, have anything humane in their motivation. Production, distribution and sale are all profit motivated. The key person, in industry in particular, singly or collectively, is the producer and not so much the consumer. Neither the economic theorists nor their voluminous theories give any meaningful direction to these so called development enterprises. Selfish motives of profit gathering is all that lie behind all these economic developments. What humans do in society, and how these interact on humans, is not their concern.

Now let us get down to our concept of moral decay in the society all around us, both here in Buddhist Sri Lanka and in the world at large. Let it be known by the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists that our primary concept of morality is **goodness of human behaviour towards humans**. This basic morality automatically facilitates our spiritual ascent in the direction of Nirvanic reach. Without this basic social foundation, one may say with conviction, a Buddhist shall never make anything of an ascent towards liberation in Nirvana. This does not require much Dhamma learning to know that the whole of this morality is covered under what is contemplated in Buddhism within the context of *sīla*.

It is now time for us to take a serious look at what is offered in Buddhism under *sīla*.



(8) Authenticity and Precision in the Interpretation of the Dhamma.

Bhikkhu Professor Dhammavihari

Greetings to our listeners. My sermon to you today is not going to assume the form of descriptive lecture notes in preparation for any examination. I am discussing with you some problems associated with the study and understanding of the *dhamma*.

Today is the Full Moon day of the month of March 2002. We are very much now in a new century, the twenty first, and a new millennium. Soon after the passing away of the Lord Buddha, i.e. more than twenty five centuries ago, an eminent member of the Buddha's dispensation, the venerable Maha Kassapa is reported to have remarked about the need to pool together the basic sayings of the deceased Master with regard to his doctrine of salvation, i.e. the *dhamma* for *nissaraṇa* and his injunctions with regard to the discipline of the male and female monastic communities of *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis* which came to be established under his guidance, i.e. the *vinaya*. The venerable Mahā Kassapa is said to have proposed that the congregation of monks should collectively recite the entire corpus of the then existent Dhamma and the Vinaya - *Handa mayaṃ dhammañ ca vinayañ ca saṅgāyeyyāma*.

The reason for this clarion call by an eminently qualified stalwart of the Sāsana is given as the possibility that time will lead to the distortion and disruption of the efficient teachings of the Master in the hands of interested parties, who in their very dissent from the orthodoxy would endeavour to make a name for themselves - *pure adhammo dippati dhammo paṭibāhīyati avinayo*

dippati vinayo paṭibāhīyati. The trends in this direction were already seen while the Master was still alive.

Some of the monks who were not living in the immediate vicinity of the Buddha were often reported by other monks as holding unacceptable, unorthodox views about the Master's basic teachings. The internal security system in the early days of the Sāsana appears extremely efficient. The miscreants were detected without undue delays and were immediately reported to the Master himself. He would have them summoned to his presence, have them convincingly interrogated and called upon to explain themselves. Congregations of monks who were present on such occasions were called upon to bear witness to the correct rendering of the Buddha's teachings.

Errors of interpretation were immediately corrected and the miscreants were severely chastised by the Buddha himself. Ariṭṭha, the Former Vulture-trapper is a glaring example. He tried to maintain zealously that the enjoyment of sensual pleasures was not that serious as was made out to be by the Buddha. So was Sāti, the Son of the Fisherman, who held a seriously aberrant belief of his own about the unchanging identity of the Samsāric continuing *viññāṇa*.

The Master had direct command over what he preached as his *dhamma*. He is always referred to by his disciples as the Master of the Dhamma - *Dhammassāmi*. The miscreants were convinced. And in the life time of the Master, they were respectful enough not **to assert to agree to disagree**. But India of the day had both a vast and equally vociferous religious and philosophical background, capable of generating schools of dissentients.

These few preliminary remarks were made to indicate to you, my listeners, what we believe to be **the dhamma interpretation position today in Sri Lanka**. It is historically one Buddhism but there are innumerable interpreters of both the theory and practice of Buddhism. How has this come to be. There are many reasons for this. Let us examine.

Theories and practices of Buddhism have grown and spread over a time period of more than twenty five centuries. By the beginning of the Christian era, i.e. within the first three or four hundred years after the passing away of the Master, the first crack up giving rise to the Mahāyāna began to show itself.

1. The main differences between the Mahayana and the Theravada. Drift in the ideals.
2. No development of Buddhist thought as such. But trends of analysing, expanding and elaborating the basic items of the earlier teachings.

